

CHAPTER X

THE KING AS OSIRIS

IN the foregoing discussion we found reason to believe that Osiris the Semitic Adonis and the Phrygian Attis were at one { ^{^ tm ated} time personated in the flesh by kings, princes, or priests who king of played the part of the god for a time and then either died ^{Egypt} a violent death in the divine character or had to redeem their life in one way or another, whether by performing a make-believe sacrifice at some expense of pain and danger to themselves, or by delegating the duty to a substitute.¹ Further, we conjectured that in Egypt the part of Osiris may have been played by the king himself.² It remains to adduce some positive evidence of this personation.

A great festival called the Sed was celebrated by the The Sed Egyptians with much solemnity at intervals of thirty years, celebrated Various portions of the ritual are represented on the ancient in Egypt monuments of Hieraconpolis and Abydos and in the oldest of thirty³ decorated temple of Egypt known to us, that of Usirniri at ^{7years-} Busiris, which dates from the fifth dynasty. It appears that the ceremonies were as old as the Egyptian civilization, and that they continued to be observed till the end of the Roman period.³ The reason for holding them at intervals of thirty

¹ See above, vol. i. pp. 16 *sq.*, 48 *at Abydos*, pp. 32-34; W. M. Flinders

sqq.) no. 114, 170 [^]., 172 *sqq.*) 176 Petrie, *Researches in Sinai* (London, *sqq.* 179 *sqq.*, 285 *sqq.*, 288 *sqq.* 1906), pp. 176-185. In interpreting

- See above, pp. 97 *sg.* 101 *sg.* the festival I follow Professor Flinders

³ A. Moret, *Du caract^{re} rcligieux* Petrie. That the festival occurred, theo- *de la royaute Pharaonique* (Paris, retically at least, at intervals of thirty 1902), pp. 235-238. The festival is years, appears to be unquestionable; discussed at length by M. Moret (*op. dt.* for in the Greek text of the Rosetta pp. 235-273). See further R. Lepsius, "Lord of Stone Ptolemy V. is called *Die Chronologie der Aegypter*, i. 161- periods of thirty years," and though the 165; Miss M. A. Murray, *The Osireion* corresponding part of the

